

Message Text

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EXDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT-GARBLED)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, JO, XF

SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING -- MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY: KING REVIEWED FOR ME HIS RECENT TRIP TO DAMASCUS, DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON-JORDAN-SYRIAN RELATIONS, SAUDI-KUWAITI EFFORT TO BRING EGYPT AND SYRIA TOGETHER, AND SYRIAN APPROACH TO MANDATE RENEWAL. MOST OF WHAT HE HAD TO SAY REPEATED EARLIER REPORTING AND WHAT RIFAI ALSO TOLD ME ABOUT DAMASCUS. PARAGRAPHS BELOW PRESENTS CAPSULATION OF KING'S VIEWS AND INFORMATION NEW TO US HERE. END SUMMARY.

1.LEBANON: KING REPEATED SYRIANS PLEASED WITH SARKIS ELECTION. HE HAD NO REASON TO BELIEVE SYRIANS DID NOT WANT FRANGIEH TO STEP DOWN RIGHT AWAY, BUT DID POINT OUT SYRIANS ARE ENGAGED IN ELIMINATING IRAQI-BACKED FACTIONS IN TRIPOLI IN SOUTH, AND IN BEIRUT. SYRIANS HAVE REACTED STRONGLY IN TRIPOLI TO WHAT THEY TOLD KING WERE IRAQI FACTIONS ATTACKS ON SYRIAN EQUIPMENT, OFFICES AND PERSONNEL. KING ALSO REPEATED FOR ME THAT SYRIANS SEEM TO SET SOME STORE IN SARKIS AS LEGITIMATE RULER OF LEBANON WHO WOULD PUT CONTENDING FACTIONS ON

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DEFENSIVE IN WHAT SEEMED ALMOST TO BE LEGALISTIC

TERMS. KING NOTED THAT SYRIANS ARE NOW PRESENT IN ALL OF LEBANON ALTHOUGH FAIRLY THIN ON THE GROUND IN THE SOUTH. HE DID EMPHASIZE SYRIAN INTENTIONS TO EXPAND THEIR MILITARY AND PROXY MILITARY ACTIONS THROUGH SAIQA AND PLA TO CONTROL THE SITUATION MORE FIRMLY.

2. SYRIA-JORDAN RELATIONS: KING HAD RELATIVELY LITTLE TO SAY ON THIS POINT. HE NOTED PRESS HAD CARRIED MANY MISLEADING STORIES ABOUT NEARLY INSTANT DCNION OR CONFEDERATION AT LAST WEEK'S DAMASCUS MEETING. APPROACH HOWEVER HAD BEEN RATHER SLOW AND PLODDING.

3. EGYPT-SYRIAN RELATIONS: KING SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT TOO MUCH TO COME OUT OF THE KUQAITI-SAUDI APPROACHES WHICH HE HAD BEEN AWARE OF THROUGH SYRIANS FOR SOME TIME. HOWEVER, HE HAD URGED SYRIANS TO ACCEPT THE INITIATIVE. HE THOUGHT SYRIANS WOULD WANT TO ACHIEVE SOME MOVE FROM EGYPT RELATING TO SINAI II -- HE IMPLIED IT COULD BE PURELY COSMETIC. HE ALSO SAID THAT SYRIAN CONFIDENCE IN SADAT HAS BEEN BADLY SHAKEN AND IT IS NOT LIKELY TO BE EASILY RECREATED. HE POINTED OUT THAT ARAFAT IS NOW BEING VIEWED BY THE SYRIANS AS MORE CLOSELY ALLIED TO EGYPT. HE CLAIMED HE HAD REPORTS THAT ARAFAT MIGHT MOVE TO EGYPT, THAT EGYPT MIGHT PUSH ISRAELIS INTO DEALING WITH THE PALESTINIANS AND THAT THE EGYPTIANS WERE EVEN CONSIDERING THE WEST BANK AND JORDAN AS A POSSIBLE SINGLE, FUTURE PALESTINIAN ENTITY. KING ALSO SAID HE HAD REPORTS OF DIRECT EGYPT-ISRAELI MEETINGS, BUT HE DID NOT SEEM TO PLACE MUCH CONFIDENCE IN THE REPORTS. WHILE HE ACCEPTED THAT THIS WAS A STEP IN EGYPTIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE AGAINST HIM, HE IS NOT UNAFFECTED OBVIOUSLY BY THESE KINDS OF STORIES. HOWEVER, HE INDICATED NO CONCERN OR IRRITATION ABOUT BEING LEFT OUT OF COMING RIYADH MEETINGS AND CLAIMS HE FEELS CONFIDENT THAT ASAD WILL LOOK AFTER JORDANIAN INTERESTS. ASAD CALLED HIM LAST WEEK TO TELL HIM THAT EGYPT HAD AGREED TO STOP PROGAGANDA ATTACKS AGAINST SYRIA AND JORDAN.

4. ON UNDOF MANDATE RENEWAL, KING SAYS ASAD HAS STILL
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PROBABLY NOT MADE UP HIS MIND. SYRIANS TALK WITH SOME BRAVADO ABOUT WHAT THEY WOULD DO IF LEBANON AND OTHER PROBLEMS WERE NOT WEIGHING THEM DOWN, I.E. REFUSE TO RENEW AND THEN LET ISRAELIS DECIDE WHAT TO DO. HOWEVER, KING'S CONCLUSION IS THAT SYRIA IS LIKELY TO RENEW AND WILL MAKE A LAST MINUTE EFFORT TO TRY TO GET SOMETHING FOR IT, POSSIBLY THROUGH THE SECURITY COUNCIL. HE SAID HE REALLY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT ASAD HAS YET FULLY

FOCUSED ON THE QUESTION. SYRIANS DEEPLY SUSPICIOUS THAT LEBANON IS BEING KEPT HOT TO KEEP THEM FROM MAKING ANY TOUGH STAND ON RENEWAL. KING SAID THAT WHAT SYRIANS REALLY WANT IS SOMETHING LIKE PASSAGE OR "MODERATE" RESOLUTION WHICH US VETOED IN JANUARY.

5. IRAQ: KING SAID IRAQIS HAVE BEEN PUTTING HEAT ON THE SYRIANS BY CUTTING OFF OIL SUPPLIES. ALSO IRAQIS HAVE BEEN PLAYING AROUND IN JORDAN AND HE RECOUNTED FOR ME LONG STORY OF HOW JORDANIANS HAD UNCOVERED AN IRAQI EFFORT USING A DISAFFECTED SYRIAN AND AN IRAQI TO SET UP SOME KIND OF UNDERGROUND OPERATION HERE IN JORDAN. SYRIANS HAD BEEN INTERESTED IN GETTING HOLD OF THEIR NATIONAL AND KING SAID APPARENTLY THE DISAFFECTED SYRIAN HAD BEEN QUITE USEFUL IN INTELLIGENCE TERMS TO THE SYRIANS. KING ALSO NOTED THAT IRAQI AGENT HAD BEEN RETURNED TO BAGHDAD AT PERSONAL REQUEST OF SADAM HUSSEIN.

6. LIBYA: KING BRIEFLY REVIEWED FOR ME STEPS IN RE-OPENING RELATIONS WITH LIBYA. HE SAID MONEY REMAINS THE KEY TO ANY FURTHER PROGRESS. LIBYANS PROPOSING AS NEW AMBASSADOR SOMEONE FORMERLY STATIONED IN JORDAN AND WHO IS IN GENERAL ACCEPTABLE IF LIBYANS COULD BE PERSUADED TO PAY PAST PLEDGES AND /OR RENEW KHARTOUM SUBSIDIES. KING ALSO SAID THAT SYRIANS COMPLAINED TO HIM ABOUT LIBYAN ACTIVITIES IN LEBANON AND REFLECTED TO HIM THAT LIBYAN RELATIONS WITH SYRIA ARE BAD. PICKERING

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